

## 20 ADVENTIST EDUCATION: TIMELESS AND TIMELY

*“. . . no exact pattern can be given for the establishment of schools in new fields. The climate, the surroundings, the condition of the country, and the means at hand with which to work must all bear a part in shaping the work” (EGW, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 531).*

Change is all around us. How does Adventist education respond? Whereas our mission for Adventist education remains timeless and unchanged, how we deliver the mission—our vision—should be continually improved to remain timely and relevant for each generation.

The Southwestern Union PK-16 Task Force has just completed their work on creating an evidence-based vision for Adventist education. The group worked from the premise that a vision is the desired future state of an organization in terms of its fundamental objectives relative to key, core areas—curriculum, instruction, assessment, environment—which are informed by the mission as well as the context of the times.

One of the essential strategies in the fulfillment of a vision is professional learning. Continuous school improvement requires change and all change requires learning. Thus, the Southwestern Union is committed to engaging our educators in the development of knowledge and skills that will deepen their learning, provide clarity of practice, and impact teaching and learning while leading to academic excellence. As our new branding *EDUCATION by Design* signifies, excellence is about building a culture that embraces coherence and continual, planned improvement.

Professional learning is organized around the goals in a Continuous School Improvement (CSI) Plan. Based on data analysis, a plan is developed to transform the vision of excellence into strategic goals and action steps that introduce change related to areas of need. The SWUC PK-12 CSI Plan has three goals that have been identified as critical to excellence in teaching and learning. Implementation of the CSI Plan will be dependent on leadership at all levels of our system to maximize and sustain the use of collaborative structures and professional learning in building the collective capacity of staff to support a culture of change.

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### Goal #1

**Continuous School Improvement Planning**—*Collaborate with conferences and schools in the use of data for continuous school improvement.*

Three years ago, SWUC educational leadership were introduced to the concept of continuous school improvement. This was followed by a webinar series on the four stages of the CSI Cycle, reinforced through a digital workbook. A common language has begun to develop as schools put in place collaborative structures to support continuous improvement.

### Goal #2

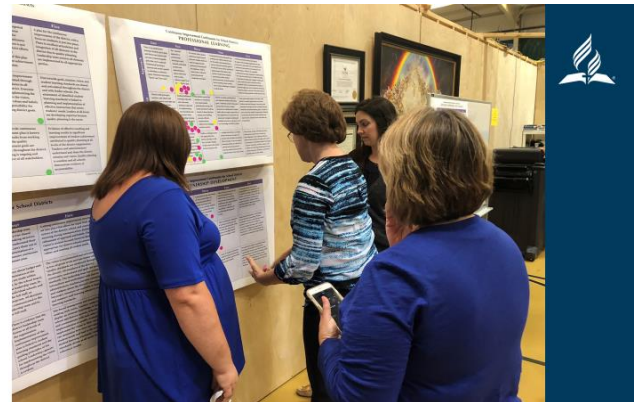
**Academic Excellence**—*Improve academic excellence for learners by bringing coherence to curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices through a standards-based approach.*

We are beginning the process of transitioning to standards-based practices, which will be phased in over the next four years. Standards-based refers to integrated systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or proficiency of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. Leadership were first introduced to the concept two years ago. A webinar series is ongoing on related topics, reinforced through a digital workbook.

### Goal #3

**Leadership**—*Strengthen the leadership skill of superintendents, principals, school leaders, and those who support them in leading learning.*

In July 2020, 83 education leaders in the Southwestern Union joined virtually for a week-long Leadership Institute, **Leading the Journey**, focused on both academic leadership and operational responsibilities. The learning was shaped by the three stances of a good leader: the change stance, the implementation stance, and the sustainability stance. Change, in particular, is a key concept in leadership; leaders must have the capacity to respond continuously to change. COVID provided a ready example of how our system can successfully adapt to change, in part because we have a coherent center—a mission—which allows us to sustain our practices during challenging times. A Community of Practice for Leadership has been established to provide an ongoing collaborative structure for capacity building.



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